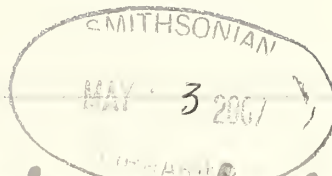


AL
671
.C333
BIRD



Lynne Mattocks Lucas



CBC Newsletter

ISSN No. 0162-7120

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 53

June 2007

Number 3

A Beginner's Guide to Birding Oregon Inlet

By Steve Shultz

North Carolina's Oregon Inlet, separating the mainland peninsula that includes Nag's Head and Kill Devil Hills from the barrier strand of Hatteras Island, produces consistently interesting birding. This short introduction to birding the Oregon Inlet area directs beginning birders, or birders new to the area, to some of the more productive locations immediately adjacent to the inlet.

Named after the first ship to pass through the waterway after its creation during an 1846 hurricane, Oregon Inlet is the only navigable ocean passage between Virginia Beach and Hatteras Inlet, a distance of over 100 miles. The inlet is spanned by the Herbert C. Bonner Bridge, built in 1963, and features a rocky groin on its south side to protect the roadbed for NC Highway 12. Accordingly, the inlet area provides a diversity of habitat ranging from ocean beach to rock-lined shoreline to inlet salt flats, with relatively easy access afforded by the bridge and highway. This diversity of habitat, along with the geographical features associated with the inlet, attracts a number of birds as well as fishermen, shell-collectors, birders, sightseers, and the merely curious.

Birders visiting the area often stop at the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center on the west side of NC 12 just before the northern terminus of the Bonner Bridge. From the parking lot, scope the shallows to the south for seasonal sea ducks, loons, grebes, pelicans, cormorants, terns and gulls. Near low tide large bars become exposed and may attract flocks of shorebirds during the migration and winter months. A scope will be needed to get a reasonable view as most of these flats are some distance away. During poor weather birds often enter the marina itself, and close looks at ducks,

grebes, and loons may await visitors.

Standing near the large bronze ship propeller at the south end of the parking area, birders gaze across a thick forest of salt marsh vegetation. During migration the tidal marsh may produce all three species of maritime sparrow common to the coast (Seaside Sparrows may be found all year), and birders adventurous enough to wade through the shallows may discover an American Bittern or Clapper Rail lurking about. While much of the area is covered by shallow water during low tide, be aware of deeper channels and holes that can surprise the unsuspecting visitor.

Leaving the fishing center, look to the grassy area separating the parking lot from the highway. After storms this area often floods and becomes attractive to shorebirds and gulls, which come to feed and bathe respectively.

Visitors with 4WD vehicles may explore the northern inlet flats by crossing Highway 12 and taking the marked ramp onto the beach. Roped off areas near the inlet often provide looks at numerous loafing gulls, terns and shorebirds.

Crossing the Bonner Bridge, visitors are treated to the spectacular sight of the Atlantic Ocean to the east, Pamlico Sound to the west, and the thin ribbon of Hatteras Island extending south. Exiting the Bonner Bridge to the south, turn left into the marked parking area a few hundred feet past the bridge's end. A short walk from the lot will introduce visitors to most of the habitats in the area, including the inlet, sand flats, and a stand of shrubbery that fall migrants just cannot seem to pass up.

(continued on page 7)

An Outstanding Weekend at the Outer Banks

By Susan Campbell

The late January meeting in Nags Head has now come and gone. I would say it was indeed a success! All of the trips except one made it out despite the windy weather and some rain Sunday morning, and our accommodations at the Ramada Inn were top notch. We could not have asked for a better meeting venue. The evening buffet was absolutely scrumptious. The trips, programs and company were wonderful. Glad so many of you could join us!

We had 197 participants and saw 181 species of birds from Friday to Sunday. A complete list can be found on the Carolina Bird Club web site. The numbers and diversity of waterfowl were fantastic. Redheads were seen by the hundreds at Pea Island and a "Common Teal" (the Eurasian form of the Green-winged Teal) was found at Alligator River. At the Pungo Unit both Ross's Goose and Cackling Goose were found mixed in with the huge flocks of Snow Geese. A Whimbrel, Red-necked Grebe and Razorbills were located by most of the trips to The Point at Cape Hatteras. Raptor diversity was not disappointing either. Both a Swainson's Hawk and a Rough-legged Hawk that have spent the last few months at Alligator River were seen by a number of lucky participants. A few folks managed to get good looks at an immature Golden Eagle at Lake Mattamuskeet.

A good number of participants had nice looks at more common overwintering species such as White Pelican,

Eurasian Wigeon, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Horned Grebe, Eared Grebe, Peregrine Falcon, Purple Sandpiper and Palm Warbler.



The pelagic trip experienced some windy conditions, but nonetheless participants had good looks at several interesting species—and not just birds either!

Thanks go out especially to the field trip leaders, beach drivers, the North Banks Bird Club who provided an amazing array of refreshments Friday evening, US Fish & Wildlife personnel, National Park Service personnel, Nature Conservancy Personnel and our speakers Dr. Ted Simons and Dr. Steve Dinsmore for making the meeting so special. Without you all, the weekend would not have been possible.

A New Long Distance Migrant Champion Crowned?

The Arctic Tern, long-time "king" (or "queen") of long-distance migration, seems to have been dethroned. The new kid on the block, none other than a familiar North Carolina pelagic species, the Sooty Shearwater. Often known as the "pelagic species that isn't" because the bird is seen from shore more frequently than its brethren, the Sooty took top billing after a recent University of California - Santa Cruz study of birds tagged in New Zealand. The shearwaters studied took part in a 40,000 mile annual migration that took them in an expansive loop around the Pacific basin. By contrast, the Arctic Tern's annual migration is frequently estimated at 22,000 miles. The Sooty Shearwaters we see off North Carolina each year likely originate from islands off the coast of South America, for example the Falkland Islands, and while not a part of the Pacific Ocean study may be expected to engage in a similar, if somewhat shorter, annual cycle.

Carolina Birding Information on the Web 24/7!
Migrate to www.carolinabirdclub.org and see what's new!

Wild Goose Chases in the Carolinas

Steve Shultz

By the time you receive this edition of the Newsletter, the wild geese that graced our lakes, ponds, and agricultural fields during the cold winter months will be gone, having followed the ancient urge to fly north to places where the sun rarely sets during the summer months. Here they will nest and (hopefully) return next season with young of the year in tow. Skeins of Snow and Canada Geese will once again wing their way to wintering grounds in the Carolinas, most arriving near the full moons of October and November.

Occasionally something else arrives with these common winter residents, and careful observers may find a number of regularly occurring rarities including Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, and with the recent splitting of Canada Goose, Cackling Goose. Even more rare is the Barnacle Goose, and while not currently on the North or South Carolina lists, Eurasian species such as Pink-footed and Bean Geese are possible in the area. It seems as if the recent Canada/Cackling Goose split has spurred renewed interest in scanning flocks of wintering geese as many aim to add the "Cackler" to their life or state lists, so who knows what might be found next!

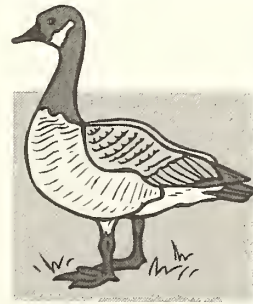
Finding rare geese in the Carolinas usually involves participating in a tried and true process: find congregations of more common species and sort through for the "odd man out". For those hoping to find or relocate a reported rarity, one must first find the "host flock" of more common Snow or Canada Geese. Snow Geese in particular seem to attract rare individuals, probably because of the fact that these birds migrate from the high arctic to the Carolinas, a path that provides an occasional opportunity for a vagrant rarity or an uncommon wintering species like Ross's Goose to join the southbound Snow Geese.

Canada Geese often winter with local flocks of feral birds. Most localities in the Carolinas have a resident flock of Canadas nearby, and occasional checks of these birds can sometimes reveal a rare wintering bird as well.

North Carolina supports large numbers of Snow Geese, normally over 100,000 birds each winter.

South Carolina supports fewer birds, but seems to produce rarities just as commonly. The Bluff Unit of the Santee NWR in central South Carolina seems to be one of the best places to search.

Many of the North Carolina birds are in three major wintering flocks that roost at Mackay Island NWR, Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR, and Mattamuskeet NWR. In recent years the Pungo flock has become somewhat famous for producing annual Ross's Geese, and occasional Cackling and Greater White-fronted Goose. The Mattamuskeet flock can be just as good for finding rarities, but recent closures of the Lake Landing area where the birds typically forage make access to this group rather difficult. While fewer rarities are reported from the Mackay Island flock, public road access leads through the foraging and roosting areas, making observation of the birds easier than can be the case in other places. Pea Island NWR on the Outer Banks of North Carolina was formerly fairly reliable for Ross's Geese early in the season (November-December), but has not had large numbers of wintering Snow Geese for the past couple of years.



Established in 1960, the 8,219 acre Mackay Island NWR in Currituck County, NC and Virginia Beach, VA provides a winter home for numerous Snow and Canada Geese. To enjoy these birds as well as hope for a rare goose, drive

through the refuge on NC Route 615. Try to time your visit for early morning or late afternoon when the birds are near their roosting areas. This can be a great place to bird during inclement weather, as the birds are often near the road and can be observed using your car as a blind. Be careful to pull completely off the road, as traffic can be heavy and fast moving in this area.

The Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR, protecting 10,000 acres in Hyde and Washington Counties in NC, provides roosting and foraging grounds for a large flock of wintering Snow Geese. In 2006-2007 this flock numbered over 75,000 individuals.

Wild Goose Chases *(continued)*

Birders hope to find the flock in agricultural fields on or near the refuge, since sorting through the birds while they loaf on Pungo Lake is quite a task owing to the distances involved. When the birds are in fields near the lake, observers are in for a treat. The spectacle of this many geese feeding is impressive, but wait until the flock takes to the air in a whoosh of wings and covers the sky. This seems to happen fairly frequently, as the birds are quite wary and take to the air at the slightest disturbance. Often the birds will come back to the same general area and continue feeding, but may decide head back to the lake for a siesta, so the wise observer will not attempt to get too close.

Lake Mattamuskeet NWR covers 50,180 acres in Hyde County, NC. Mattamuskeet harbors impressive numbers of both Snow and Canada Geese each winter, with many of the birds staying in the Lake Landing area. This section of the refuge has recently been closed to entry during the winter months, making study of the flocks difficult. Lucky birders may find birds in agricultural fields surrounding the refuge. Canada Geese are quite common in most area of the refuge, so even if the Lake Landing impoundments are closed, there is a chance at finding Cackling Geese anywhere on the refuge. Recent spots where this species has been found include along the highway 94 causeway, on the main lake from the end of the Wildlife Drive, and in the impoundment to the south of the entrance road leading to the refuge office.

In the eastern and central part of the Carolinas the aforementioned method of searching for rarities works

well, but in the mountain region, where flocks of wintering waterfowl are less common, another method to finding rarities has to be considered. Many of the rare geese reported from the mountains are migrants heading for the coastal areas to winter. Mountain observers have to catch these birds "on the fly", and rely on frequent visits to lakes and ponds during migration windows, especially during inclement weather that serves to encourage migrant waterfowl to take an unscheduled stop in the mountains. Although this seems to be a "low percentage" method of finding rare geese, favored mountain areas seem to produce Ross's, Cackling, and especially Greater White-fronted Geese every year, although many of these birds are one or two day visitors whereas a coastal discovery may linger for weeks or even months, allowing many lucky birders the chance to study uncommon species.

Whether in the mountains, the piedmont, or the coast keep an eye on those flocks of geese, rarities have shown up in spots ranging from the smallest farm or neighborhood pond to the massive wintering flocks in the east. Who knows, you might find the first accepted record for a new addition to the state list!

Even if your visit to one of the Carolinas' wintering grounds for migrant geese does not reveal one of the more uncommon species, enjoy experiencing the sights and sounds of these most incredible birds. Knowing that the creatures feeding or roosting in the near distance flew several thousand miles from the arctic and tundra regions to winter in "our neck of the woods" is often enough to satisfy most visitors.

New Members	Edna and Sherman Heck Blounts Creek, NC	Carole Miller Arden, NC	Cherrie Sneed Meggett, SC	Lennard Wolfson Sunset Beach, NC
Beth Cavanaugh Lexington, SC	David Howell Rocky Mount, NC	Fentress Munden Morehead City, NC	Jacki St. John Cary, NC	Sylvia Wooley Anderson, SC
Gina Cotton High Point, NC	Parkin Hunter Columbia, SC	Diane Rand Bluffton, SC	John Teate Salem, SC	<i>Deceased Members:</i> Mrs. Barrett Crook New London, NC
Rosalie Crouch Charleston, SC	Wayne and Kim Looper Piedmont, SC	Frank and Jean Ripp Whispering Pines, NC	Rena Tobey Asheville, NC	Grady Oliver Abbeville, SC
Denise Dupon Taylors, SC	Bob McGinness Asheboro, NC	Robert Sherrill Morrisville, NC	Patricia Voelker Lexington, SC	Beula Scheffer Ovid, MI

More of Your Masked Duck Stories!

The February issue of the Newsletter featured an article on the Carolina birders traveling south to visit the rare Masked Duck residing at the Viera Wetlands in east-central Florida. There were more responses from members than there was space to print them, a challenge I hope to overcome here. So, without further ado, here are more of your Masked Duck stories!

Ron and Anne Clark of Kings Mountain, NC write: We left on Monday, the 11th of December around 2:30 p.m., after waiting for the launch of the Space Shuttle to be over so that we could avoid any traffic related to the event. With dinner and the required Dairy Queen stop, we were 10 miles from the wetlands around 10:00 that night. The next morning we drove on, and right up to the PAIR of ducks, a nice surprise. That morning was the first time the other had been reported there. Such a good lifer was really too easy, but we're not complaining. After that, Merritt Island NWR, Tybee Island and Savannah NWR and back home Thursday night, tallying 107 species. Well worth the trip.

Tom Krakauer of Bahama, NC writes: I picked my friend up at RDU at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday and immediately headed south. We got as far as Darien, GA after taking a break for a delightful Greek dinner at Georgio's at the St. George, SC exit. All trips to and from Florida should be scheduled around meals at Georgio's! We hit the road at 5:00 a.m. the next morning, and made it to the Viera Wetlands by 10. The Masked Duck was spotted within 5 minutes with the help of a local birder who pointed it out. The duck is a cutie, but sleeping ducks don't hold ones attention for a long time. It reminded me of the time in Venezuela when my son and I saw a giant anteater moving sloooooowly through an open pasture. I watched the anteater for a few minutes before my attention was diverted by Pied and Black and White Water Tyrants. I found that I was able to do both, but Alan still questions how my attention could be diverted. Oh My.

Viera Wetlands are wonderful because the birds are not at all skittish and we got point blank looks at Limpkin, ibis (both species), Wood Stork, Hooded Mergansers, etc. A Least Bittern made a cameo ap-

pearance. The afternoon was spent at Merritt Island. We returned to Merritt the next morning to see Florida Scrub Jay and more shorebirds and do a little butterflying. Salt-marsh Skipper is elegant.

We headed inland and did Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area for Red-cockaded Woodpecker (a miss) but enjoyed the long leaf pine flat woods and then proceeded to get to Joe Overstreet Rd. at Lake Kissimmee at about 4:00, spent almost 2 hours there, but felt that we had not done it justice, so stayed overnight at St Cloud. Don't miss the Catfish Place, it is terrific. Naturally it had wonderful catfish, but also has fried green tomatoes.

Got back to Joe Overstreet Rd. by 8 the next morning and got the trifecta of Crested Caracara, Snail Kite and Whooping Crane plus a very tolerant Peregrine Falcon sitting in a treetop 40 feet off the road. The large flocks of Wild Turkey were an extra treat, with the largest of 5 flocks total 80 individuals.

You see, birding must be complemented by good food and butterflies. However, I got my one lifer, and June got 20. We saw 101 bird species on the trip.

John Ennis of Leland, NC writes: Greg Massy, Joy Hosier, Danny Thorpe, and I headed out to find the Masked Duck at 3:30 a.m. When we arrived at Viera it was overcast with steady wind that was at least 35 mph, but within a few minutes Greg found her. We got pictures but the light was bad so we decided to drop by Saturday morning for more photos since we were going by that exit anyway. We easily found her again the next morning and took additional shots.

Our itinerary was to include Merritt Island NWR on Sunday on the way home to see Scrub Jays. The



Masked Duck
John Ennis

More of Your Masked Duck Stories! (continued)

Space Shuttle had been cancelled for Friday and was expected to be cancelled for Saturday, again due to the weather. Since Merritt Island is usually closed the day after a launch, we changed our itinerary to include Lake Kissimmee SP for the jays, after stops at Lake Marian and Joe Overstreet Landing. We got all of our target birds and then headed north to the Apopka "Kingbird Roost"...at some time, serendipity took over. Up to that time, we had paid no attention to Discovery, it was just a minor irritation that might cause us to miss Merritt Island. In fact, Greg was advising other birders who came for the Shuttle about the Masked Duck. Can you believe all of the people coming to see the shuttle launch and not the Masked Duck? :-)

We arrived at the kingbird roost close to 5 p.m. and had front row seats for a number of the birds coming in. I know we had at least 10 each of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Western Kingbirds. We then headed over to Titusville to have dinner before driving south to the hotel in Cocoa (serendipitous). We had a 40-minute wait (serendipitous) for a table, and some-

where in mid-meal, we realized that the customers and wait staff were getting excited. Little did we know the shuttle was not cancelled (serendipitous). We asked and were told we could see it from the parking lot since the restaurant is only about 10 miles from the launch pad. We asked for quick checks and got outside with 8 minutes to go (serendipitous). As we went out, most of the restaurant staff came with us and climbed to the roof of the restaurant. Discovery blasted off exactly on schedule at 8:47 p.m. and we were treated to an incredible fireball directly in front of us. This was the first night flight in four years... serendipitous because it was just that much more dramatic!

Planning on Birding Outside the U.S.?

New Passport Requirements went into effect in January requiring all U.S. citizens traveling by air to or from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda, among other locations, to carry a valid passport. You can get more information at the U.S. State Department's website: www.travel.state.gov

Dobbins Farm/Townville CBC Day Trip a Success!

By Linda Kolb

Gas for bird trip: \$25 Hotel room: \$50

Great people, great weather, and good birds: Priceless! (Okay \$10 for the trip fee)

Except for the fact that the time changed and we were standing around in the dark for a half hour or so, I thought the bird trip was great! I met and re-met some nice people and we were able to help out some new CBC members and new birders. We saw a total of 55 birds. Unfortunately nothing outstanding (spring seems a bit late this year) but a nice collection anyway.

Our trip started out with a Great Horned Owl doing a fly over (what you would expect at o'dark thirty) and proceeded from there. We looked for the Sandhill Cranes that had been recently seen, but did not find them in the two places they have been spotted. We then proceeded to the Dobbins Farm cow ponds where

we saw a Horned Lark, heard but could not find the American Pipits in the newly plowed field, and saw Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Mallard and a pair of Gadwall on the ponds. A Fish Crow joined the flock of American Crows by the ponds, which were accompanied by numerous Ring-billed Gulls.

The group then moved on to the Beaverdam Creek WMA where we saw Wilson's Snipe, Wood Ducks, American Coots, a Great Blue Heron, Canada Geese, and incredible flying displays by Turkey Vultures with a Northern Harrier playing games with them. The Red-shouldered Hawks did not want to be out- done, so they proved they could be very noisy as well, and also do great fly-bys. All in all I hope everyone had a great time and I hope they will come back in a month or so when the area should be full of warblers. Thank y'all for coming!

A Beginner's Guide to Birding Oregon Inlet (continued)

Catwalks extending out over the inlet on both sides of the bridge provide an interesting vantage point from which to scope for waterbirds, and make an excellent perch for studying the difference between Common and Forster's Terns during the summer. From the soundside catwalk scan the sandy island to the west, most of the time a number of pelicans, gulls, and cormorants loaf here. Frequently one or more Great Cormorants can be found during the cooler months, and occasionally an unusual shorebird puts in an appearance. A spotting scope is normally necessary for viewing these birds, and the light is poor in the afternoon, making a morning visit more productive.

From the base of the soundside catwalk, walk along the shore for a few hundred feet to the south. During migration (which begins in July for shorebirds) and in winter this spot usually attracts a small number of shorebirds, and while the numbers may not be great, diversity is often high and the birds typically allow close study. American Oystercatchers can often be found on the short rocky groin, and the small bits of marsh harbor a rail from time to time. If you are visiting during the fall migration season, check the power wires overhead frequently. This is a good spot to find something like a Western Kingbird.

From the parking lot a short footpath leads through the phragmites reeds to the location of a former Coast Guard Station boat basin. Active as recently as the late 1980s, the inlet's dynamics have now filled most of the basin with sand. Where large cutters and smaller near-shore boats used to dock, fisherman now wade in the shallowest of water. When few people are present, like during poor weather, the small basin can be attractive to sea birds looking for shelter from the elements. Even in good weather the occasional duck, grebe, or loon can be seen at close range within the basin, and the wooden pilings make favorite perches for gulls and terns during the summer. By walking straight ahead through the dunes, one comes to a wide sandy flat several hundred yards wide. Prior to the placement of the rocky groin to the north, this area was under water. Accretion of sand formed the "new land", and the ocean is now a short walk away. During the warmer months much of this area may be roped off to provide protection for nesting birds including Common Tern, American Oystercatcher, Willet, Black Skimmer, and others. Being careful not to trespass on any closed areas, scope the flats from outside the perimeter rope in hopes of finding nesting adults, or newly fledged young. During the cooler months a number of gulls can usually be found resting here, possibility including one or more Lesser Black-backed Gulls, but more likely the expected trio of Ring-billed, Herring, and Great Black-backed Gulls. The winter months are

also an opportunity to find the threatened Piping Plover, which winters in small numbers some years on the open flats.

By now you should be facing the ocean, with the rock groin to the left (north). Scanning the ocean may produce sea ducks (Surf Scoter and Bufflehead are most common), grebes (Red-necked are at least occasional here in late winter), and loons. Walking over to the groin, check the seaward tip for Purple Sandpipers, a couple are often here from late fall through spring. From this point birders can retrace the path across the sand flats toward the parking area, or walk along the top of the groin to the old boat basin.

The dunes between the groin and the rapidly deteriorating Coast Guard Station buildings to the south are one of the easier places in the state to find the "Ipswich" form of the Savannah Sparrow. This large, pale race of Savannah Sparrow breeds in the Sable Island area of Nova Scotia and winters exclusively among the dunes of the southeastern U.S. coast. Time spent examining the numerous Savannah Sparrows in the area often results in finding one or more of the "Ipswich" variety. Consult a field guide for identification details.

Oregon Inlet can be a very exciting place during the fall passerine migration in September and October. Birders who find themselves in the area soon after a cold front passes often find the bushes and shrubs near the "Old Coast Guard Station" just south of the inlet dripping with migrants. While it seems strange to look for migrants on the south side of the inlet instead of the north, the birds appear to be attempting to get back on track by heading northwest after finding themselves too far to the east and over the ocean. The birds hesitate at crossing the inlet, and collect in the nearest suitable habitat, which happens to be along the old entrance road to the Coast Guard complex. By walking (carefully) along NC 12 south for a few hundred yards from the public parking lot, one soon comes to a road leading to the east. Walk along this road slowly, scanning the vegetation on both sides. With just a little luck you may have drop-dead looks at a variety of passerine migrants. From mid-October through November sparrows rule the roost, with uncommon species like Clay-colored and Vesper seen here as often as anywhere else on the Banks.

Whatever the season, Oregon Inlet is sure to have something on tap for the beginning, intermediate, and advanced birder. But be forewarned, a quick stop can easily take up half your day as you explore all the inlet has to offer.

CBC Visits the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas

By Dave Lenat and Bruce Smithson

Eleven members of the Carolina Bird Club enjoyed a fruitful trip to Texas' Lower Rio Grande Valley April 7-15. Based entirely out of Harlingen (What! A birding trip where I only have to unpack once!), trip participants tallied a total of 235 species/subspecies.

Wilmington's Bruce Smithson, ably assisted by Linda Kolb, expertly led the group. It should be noted that all participants made major contributions in finding and identifying birds. My friend Terry Anderson joined the CBC just so he could take this trip. He told me in a recent email: "I really liked the group and the way we interacted".

Several of the trip's highlights included:

- Nesting Aplomado Falcons from the group re-introduced at Laguna Atascosa NWR
- Many White-tailed and Harris's Hawks along the roads.
- Clay-colored Robin (after a long and determined search at Quinta Mazatlan)
- Two Red-billed Pigeons at Roma Bluffs
- Northern Beardless Tyrannulet at Bentsen
- White-collared Seedeater at Zapata
- Brown Jays at a feeder along the Rio Grande River
- Both Cassin's Sparrow (skylarking!), and heard-only Botteri's Sparrow
- The now-famous "fruit stand nesting" Tamaulipas Crow pair in Brownsville

The large number of Texas and western specialties make it difficult to decide what is a "highlight", and many of the group added over 40 birds to their life lists.

At Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park, former N.C. birder and now World Birding Center director Josh Rose led a Thursday night walk through the famous-for-birding park along the river. Near the primitive camping site a strange owl call prompted subsequent study of owl recordings. We agreed the cat-like calls most resembled an unexpected Long-eared Owl. The productive walk also produced a calling Elf Owl, a calling Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, and a seen/heard Eastern Screech Owl.

Dusk observations here included Lesser Nighthawk, Common Nighthawk and Parakee. Additionally we had amazingly good looks at the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl the prior day.

Our rarest warbler was a "Brewster's Warbler" (Golden-winged Warbler x Blue-winged Warbler) – a bird which was initially seen only briefly as an unidentified mystery bird. Patient waiting and stalking allowed all participants to get a glimpse of this bird. For the whole trip, we had 20 warbler species. A "fall out" on South Padre Island on Saturday filled the bushes with warblers, orioles and vireos. A motorcycle rally was being held the same day, presenting some interesting human contrasts. A few hundred yards away, we could also see resting flocks of terns and gulls, with one Reddish Egret dancing along the shore.

We searched for Red-crowned Parrots and Green Parakeets at dusk on several occasions. Every citizen of Harlingen had a different sure-fire place to see these birds at sunset and we tried several spots. We had to be content with one fly-over Parrot seen by the whole group, while two people saw distant flocks of Green Parakeets. Spring can be a tough time to find the parrots and parakeets as they are much less conspicuous when nesting. To any future searchers, we recommend going to the park by the Harlingen library, and don't forget to bring along plenty of snacks and your choice of cold beverage.

While not known as a South Texas specialty, one of our more unusual finds was a Ruff discovered on April 8th along the 15-mile drive at Laguna Atascosa. Participants enjoyed watching this primarily Eurasian shorebird slowly working its way along the edge of the road in short grass. While our star photographer (Mark Jones) could not get a picture, we did obtain one slightly out-of focus shot to provide documentation for any doubters. Mark took thousands of other pictures of birds, butterflies and flowers; the "click, click, click" of his shutter was our constant background noise. We look forward to seeing more of these pictures, and I look forward to more CBC expeditions.

CBC Announces Bonus Field Trip to Brunswick County, NC

Brunswick County "Big Bird" Tour Saturday July 28, 2007

Trip Leader: Bruce Smithson Limit: 12 Cost: \$10

Join fellow CBC members for a day of summer birding along the southeastern NC coast. We will concentrate on the Sunset Beach/Ocean Isle Beach area targeting Wood Storks and Reddish Egrets. Other "Big Birds" we should encounter include Brown Pelican, Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great and Snowy Egret, Tri-colored, Little Blue, Black-crowned, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black Skimmer, American Oystercatcher, Willet, and White Ibis. In the skies above we'll keep an eye out for Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, and Bald Eagle. Of course we'll take note of the numerous terns and shorebirds we will see in this coastal habitat. We will meet at the Food Lion parking lot at the crossroads community of Seaside, between Ocean Isle Beach and Sunset Beach, on Hwy 904 at 8:00 a.m. Bring drinks and snacks. Walking on packed sand of a half mile or so may be involved to reach flats where the Reddish Egret might be seen. Contact Bruce Smithson at bruce-smithson@netscape.net or (910) 799-5083 **before** sending in your registration fee.

"Big" Trips

The "Big" field trips offered through the club are a great opportunity for those interesting in joining fellow CBC members as we explore great birding locations outside the Carolinas. At press time the two upcoming out of state trips had full rosters, but late cancellations can occur, so please consider joining the waiting list if you see a trip that interests you. This years trips include the West Slope of the Rocky Mountains, visiting Utah, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, May 26-June 3, 2007; and Southeast Arizona, searching for hummingbirds and Arizona specialties, August 6-12, 2007. Contact Dana Harris at 630-980-1049 or e-mail at hq@carolinabirdclub.org for more info and to reserve your spot on the waiting lists.

CBC Bonus Day Trip Registration Form

Please update my membership record with this address information.

Name (s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____ Email _____

Enclosed is my check for _____ Brunswick County day trip(s) @ \$10 each. My total is \$ _____ for the above registrations.

I understand that Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trips leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip. I release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature _____ Date _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to: CBC, 353 Montabello, Bloomingdale, IL 60108.



Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
6325 Falls of the Neuse Road,
STE 9 PMB 150, Raleigh, NC
27615

Periodicals Postage Paid
at Bloomington, IL 60108
and additional mailing
offices



*****AUTO**MIXED AADC 270

142 0 3000

SMITHSONIAN LIBRARIES

25 Mrc 154 Nhb

PO Box 37012

Washington DC 20013-7012

5
7

Upcoming CBC Meetings

Santee, SC Fall 2007
Georgetown, SC Winter 2008

CBC Board Members

President, Stephen Harris
Bloomington, IL, 630-980-1049
srharris@mindspring.com

Vice-Presidents

Marion Clark, Lexington, SC
John Ennis, Leland, NC
Simon Thompson, Asheville, NC

Secretary

Pru Williams, Hope Mills, NC

Treasurer

Bruce Smithson, Wilmington, NC

NC Members-at-Large

Kim Horstman, Durham
Gail Lankford, Asheville
Dwayne Martin, Hickory
Ed Toone, Wilmington

SC Members-at-Large

Dr. J. Drew Lanham, Clemson
Linda Kolb, Seneca

Immediate Past President, Bob Wood, Ridgeway, SC

Editor of *The Chat*, Kent Fiala, Hillsborough, NC

Website Editor, Kent Fiala, Hillsborough, NC

Editor of *CBC Newsletter*, Steven Shultz

4201 Sentimental Lane, Apex, NC 27539

919-779-2826, sshultz@nc.rr.com

Submission deadlines are due the 1st of January, March, May,
July, September, and November.

Headquarters Secretary, Dana Harris, Bloomington, IL

630-453-8270, srharris@mindspring.com

Rare Bird Alert: 704-332-BIRD

CBC Website: www.carolinabirdclub.org

The *CBC Newsletter* is published bimonthly by Carolina Bird Club, Inc. Founded in 1937 the membership is open to anyone interested in birds, natural history, and conservation. Current dues are: Individual & non-profit, \$20; Associate (in household with individual), \$5; Student, \$15; Patron, \$50 and up; Sustaining & businesses, \$25; Life, \$400; Associate Life (in household with Life Member), \$100 (both Life memberships can be paid in four annual installments).

Membership dues of \$20 include \$4 for a subscription to *CBC Newsletter* and \$5 for a subscription to *The Chat*. Cost for CBC bird checklists, including postage: 10@\$2.50, 25@\$6, 50@\$11.75, 75@\$17.75, and 100@\$23.50. Submit application for membership, change of address, and payment for checklists to: CBC Headquarters Secretary, 6325 Falls of the Neuse Road, STE 9 PMB 150, Raleigh, NC 27615